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Political Attitudes in the Polish Air ForceAir Force Officer Schooling

1. Military personnel and civilians were subjected to similar qualifications prior to their acceptance into an air force officer school program. As of May 1958, persons who were members of the Polish Communist Party (PZPR), the Union of Socialistic Youth (ZMS - Związek Młodzieży Socjalistycznej), or who came from working-class backgrounds would normally be given preferential treatment for appointment. Still in effect was the regulation that an applicant could have no relatives residing in the West. Military personnel were required to submit their application to the immediate unit commander, who judged the applicant on the basis of his past record and a personal interview. The unit personnel officer completed and forwarded the necessary paper work, which included a thorough political opinion of the candidate by the commander. It was sent to Polish Air Force Headquarters (DWLOT) in Warsaw, where necessary steps were taken for a background investigation of the applicant. The investigator who was assigned to an individual case rendered a written political opinion, which was added to the individual's file. Acceptance or rejection was then made by Air Force Headquarters.
2. A civilian applying for air force officer schooling initiated his application with the District Military Command (WKR - Wojskowa Komenda Rejonowa). Upon completion of a review of the application, the People's Militia (MO - Milicja Obywatelska) was given the task of making a thorough background investigation. A written political opinion by the investigating official was added to the individual's file and forwarded to Air Force Headquarters for a conclusive decision.
3. Upon entrance into the various officers' schools, the students usually formed a battalion of 360 cadets. The battalion was divided into three companies, and each company in turn had four groups. A political officer, usually a lieutenant, was assigned to each company and held responsible for its Basic Party Organization (POP - Podstawowa Organizacja Partyjna). This individual and his subordinates were responsible for the control of the political atmosphere and for the political behavior of the company personnel at all times. This control was maintained by three or four informers within each group; they usually were eventually exposed, and the students would not voice their political opinions until they had oriented themselves as to who were the informers. Those members of the group who were not Party supporters, but who desired to complete the course, maintained an apolitical tone. Students soon formed their own unofficial groups and endeavored to

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maintain an attitude which would not attract the suspicion of the political informers.

4. The Section of Political Schooling (Dzial Nauk Politycznych) in each student battalion was responsible for formal political training. [redacted] 50X1-HUM

[redacted] it consisted of a commander and several instructors who specialized in various aspects of Communism, such as the history of Communism, Marxism, Communistic theory, and political economics. [redacted] 50X1-HUM

it was mandatory to receive 600 hours of political schooling per year. In 1956, with the advent of the Gomulka regime, a maximum of four hours per week was established for the political indoctrination course. There was also a change of topics, with emphasis placed on development of nationalistic feelings rather than the advocacy of Communism and the Communist Party.

5. Students were not entirely receptive to political indoctrination; however, it was considered to be the most important step toward graduation. Students were required to complete this course with a passing grade; if they failed, they had two weeks to raise their grade or face dismissal from the school. If dismissed, the student had to complete his two-year military obligation in another unit.

Unit Political Organization

6. In 1956, during the Gomulka regime, political teachings in regular Air Force units were de-emphasized. The political officer on the regimental staff (zastepca do spraw politycznych) had subordinate to him two junior officers, the education and culture officer (oficer kulturalno-oswiatowy) and the propaganda officer (oficer propagandy i ewidencji partyjnej). The general responsibility of these officers was to monitor and advance the Party line. [redacted] 50X1-HUM

The current political tone was set at air force level and carried through the chain of command.

7. Formal political schooling was divided into lectures for officers and enlisted men. The staff officer of the political section conducted the officer lectures, while the two junior officers conducted the others. For each additional year a man had in service he underwent a different political training program. In each squadron was a political agitator (agitator), who was responsible for reading Communist literature to other enlisted men in his unit. These agitators were subordinate to the two junior officers in the political section. All officers, in addition to two-hour weekly political lectures, were given a political reading list of all Communist literature. Each man

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maintained a record of his political reading, upon which he would eventually be tested. [] the more an individual read, the better it was for his career. Within all units there was a Basic Political Organization (POP - Podstawowa Organizacja Partyjna). It was not mandatory for personnel to join this organization, but many belonged for personal advancement. There were no other political movements or organizations known [] within the PAF.

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8. The mild political tone in Poland in May 1958 was attributed to the fact that the incumbent Minister of Defense was General Marian SPYCHALSKI, who in 1949 had been sentenced to death for an attempt to liquidate all political apparatus within the military. His death sentence was commuted by Jan Bierut and he subsequently served seven years imprisonment. He was freed and placed in his present position by Gomulka. In connection with this lessening of military political pressures, [] the dismissal of Soviet personnel serving in the Polish Armed Forces. During 1955-56 those Soviets occupying key positions in the Polish armed forces were involuntarily released from active duty and returned to the U.S.S.R. It was generally known that many desired to remain as civilians in Poland, but it was also believed that any who did so might find their lives endangered. These Soviet returnees were not assigned to the armed forces but were placed in farm and industrial cooperatives as civilian laborers. [] the story of the Soviet lieutenant colonel husband of a Polish girl whom he had known. Upon return to the U.S.S.R. he and his wife were placed in a farm cooperative as laborers. The girl's father visited the Soviet Union and upon return mentioned that the situation was "shameful and disgraceful to the Russian people".

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Propaganda

9. Propaganda in the Polish Air Force was divided into four phases-- political, economic, technical, and scare. This program was closely monitored by the political officers and presented to all personnel as part of their political indoctrination training. []

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[] After 1956, however, this was revised and the Polish Communist Party seemed to emphasize nationalistic feelings. The Polish populace was reminded of the threatening border situation []

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[] This type of propaganda was highly acceptable to military personnel, since they long had been imbued with a hatred for the [] people. Another propaganda line centered on the [] atrocities of World War II, and the possibility of these occurring again.

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10. Economic propaganda was presented to personnel with charts, figures and diagrams comparing Capitalism and Communism, to the detriment of Capitalism. Most officers would not believe these teachings because they saw true Communism all around them. [redacted] at times the facts were so mixed up that the students could not decipher the object in mind. Often they deliberately asked the political officer a question they knew he could not answer. 50X1-HUM
11. The political officers attempted to compare the technical system employed in the United States and that employed in the Soviet Union. As an example they cited the rapid technical advancement of the Soviet Union and showed that life in the U. S. S. R. had improved greatly since 1918. Student officers and enlisted men, however, believed that this advancement was due to the aid given [redacted] before, during, and after World War II; the kidnapped [redacted] scientists; and the Soviet spy net which stole Western secrets. Political officers also attempted to theorize that Soviet air technology was far superior [redacted]. The Polish AF officers would then use RB-57 flyover incidents as fuel to incite the political instructors and would inquire why these aircraft were not intercepted. The political instructors would answer that the penetrating RB-57 aircraft were sent to take photographs of Polish and Soviet aircraft attempting interception. However, the Polish AF officers believed that the Soviets had done their best to intercept the foreign aircraft, using the most modern equipment available, and had failed. These failures were considered an immense propaganda victory for the West, even among the highest-ranking officers. 50X1-HUM
12. The final phase, scare propaganda, was by far the most dramatic and effective. It was brought about by the combined efforts of the political officers and legal aides. It included a form of mock trial, initiated by a statement of charges, in which punishments were emphasized -- 15 years imprisonment for desertion and the smaller offences, and the death penalty for spies and defectors. The first example given [redacted] of the mock trials of pilots who had defected in jet aircraft. These were tried in absentia. Specifications of the trial were read in Poznan and publicized throughout the Polish Air Force in the daily bulletin. The statement of charges was made known to only those individuals of equal or higher rank than the accused. Men of lower rank never officially heard of the incident. During the course of a defection trial the truth was so distorted that it was easy to believe that the defector was engaged in illegal activities and was possibly an agent of the West. All defectors were eventually sentenced to death. With regard to defector returnees, the most publicized trial was that of an air force corporal, whose case was brought to the attention of all units. This man was displayed at most air force installations where mock trials 50X1-HUM

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were held for the benefit of the other men. He was sentenced to death. [redacted] this type of propaganda was extremely effective, especially to the younger enlisted men. [redacted] it was directly utilized for the benefit of new recruits.

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